

# Hawksbill Turtle Recovery Program

## Island of Hawaii - 2005 Season Highlights

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**ALOHA HONU EA FANS!** The 2005 nesting season is officially pau! All sixteen mama turtles have finished nesting and all of their eggs have hatched out. The season's first nest was laid in early June and the last hatchlings reached the ocean in early December. Over forty dedicated volunteers and two technicians documented and protected 48 nests at five beaches: Apua Point, Halape, Kamehame, Pohue Bay, and Awili Point. From the 48 nests, we estimate that 6,272 hatchlings safely reached the ocean. This year had the highest number of both turtles and nests since 1999 and the highest number of hatchlings since 1995! Some of the season's other major highlights include tagging eight new nesting turtles and documenting activity at two new beaches. Four of the newly tagged turtles nested at Pohue. Since 1991, we have now tagged 67 adult female hawksbills, documented 583 nests, and estimate that 63,380 hatchlings have safely reached the ocean. The exceptionally high amount of newly tagged hawksbills this year strengthens our hope and commitment to the ongoing success of the hawksbill in Hawaii.



**Apua Point:** Nesting hawksbills kept volunteers on their toes this season, with late afternoon nesting activity as well as all-nighters. There was even a surprise turtle late in the season that had not been seen since 1997! She probably was nesting at isolated spots along the Park coastline during these missing years. Volunteers monitored eleven nests laid by four turtles. One of the turtles was newly tagged and she went on to lay three nests. The other two turtles nested after a typical three year absence. As in previous years, most of the hatchlings required assistance from volunteers to make it over the rocky, cobbled shoreline to the ocean. Additionally, this season hatchlings had to struggle against a non-native pea plant and its roots to emerge from their nests. Still, over 1,300 hatchlings made it to the sea!

**Halape:** One unobserved nest was laid here this season. The nest was shallow and characteristic of two turtles nesting at Apua Point, one of whom likely laid this nest since she was not at Apua during her anticipated internesting period. During the excavation of the nest, many backcountry visitors had a special treat observing trapped hatchlings removed from the nest and released at the beach by our volunteers.

**Kamehame:** Five turtles produced seventeen nests this season. One of the turtles had not been seen for eight years (she nested along the Kau coast during those missing years). The remaining four turtles returned from typical three or four year absences. Additionally, two untagged turtles showed up, but they did not nest and did not return to Kamehame. One of them made numerous nesting attempts approximately five miles down the coast at Kawa. At Kamehame, big surf and high tides combined to inundate ten of the nests on two separate occasions in September. While two nests were washed away, others were remarkably fine and four of these nests still had nest successes greater than 88%! We estimate that close to 2,000 hatchlings safely crawled to the ocean.

**Kawa:** A new turtle that was tagged at Kamehame but did not nest there, arrived at Kawa Bay and a nearby rocky beach. Due to limited access to this beach, we were not able to camp and monitor turtles on a regular basis. It is likely that she nested since we found evidence of numerous digs and crawls.

**Pohue Bay:** This season was by far the biggest ever at Pohue with fifteen nests laid by four newly tagged turtles! Around 2,450 hatchlings made it to the ocean this season, more than any other nesting beach. The nests were located at the main beach and the adjacent small coral beach. Also, a turtle that nested at Pohue was also observed prospecting for nesting sites at Kahakahakea, a rocky white sand beach four miles southeast of Pohue. Prior to this year, we had documented only fifteen nests and tagged three turtles since monitoring began in 1993. But this was primarily due to the lack of funding and personnel to monitor this site and inability to access this beach every season. The abundant turtle activity provided opportunities for our project to further establish a good relationship with the Pohue land managers, who had the unique experience of handling hatchlings during a nest excavation. Another very interesting event occurred when Cheyenne Laczek-Johnson from Hawaii Wildlife Fund observed a tagged hawksbill at Kahekili (Airport Beach), Maui on November 14 and 15. This turtle was tagged at Pohue in July and laid three nests there this season. The sighting supports the satellite movement findings by George Balazs regarding interisland (Hawaii to Maui) movement of post-nesting hawksbills to their resident foraging grounds.

**Awili Point (Road to the Sea):** This beach has long been suspected to be nesting habitat and this year it was finally confirmed due to our dedicated volunteers who were willing to camp for 10 to 15 nights at a time. One newly tagged turtle laid four nests, three of which had nest successes of 84% or higher! Approximately 461 hatchlings made it to the ocean.

**Kapoho:** Campers reported observing a turtle nesting attempt at a pocket of black sand near Kapoho Bay in July. We followed up with monitoring but were unable to document any nests there. It was probably a hawksbill turtle since nesting has occurred along that coastline in the past.

**Keauhou, Halape Iki, Punaluu, Koloa, Horseshoe, and Ninole:** Although no nests were documented at any of these beaches this season, crawls and digs were reported at Keauhou, Halape Iki, Punaluu and Koloa. They were all checked for hawksbill activity however we could have missed a nest. We assisted the UH-Hilo Marine Option Program to rescue a stranded green sea turtle from the pond at Ninole. We also provided outdoor education for numerous Kau high school students.

**Special Mahalo to Minky Markiewicz and the 2005 Honuea Volunteers and Interns:**

Jeff Kutz	Daniela Muhawi	Devon Lang	Bethany Stefanec	Andrea Frommel
Stephan Classen	Samuel Apuna	Gregory Crownover	Brent Beyerle	Kathryn Chen
Tyson Lee	Alex Cheung	Jared Chapman	Sarah Snyder	Lauren Kurpita
Heather Jones	Kevin Craine	Jason Fidora	Jessica Johnson	Monica Chavez
Nicole Corbo	Jodie Schulten	Colleen Moriarty	Mike Koontz	Kori Hutchinson
Carol Gress	Megan Barker	Heidi Minga	Nicole Contreras	Keith Starling
Ian Matthews	Mackay Burcher	Julie Snider	Maggie Tam	Collin Christiansen
Selena Tinga	Sarah Knox	Mike Long		

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